

2014 MBC ANNUAL MEETING SCHEDULE

1st Session | Tuesday Morning | October 28, 2014

8:30	Call to Order	Matt Buckles
	Worship through Music	Gerry Gore
	Scripture Reading: Matthew 10:1-7	Matthew Alexander
	Discipleship Testimony	Jeff Holland
	Opening Prayer	Will Overstreet
9:00	Organization of the Convention	Matt Buckles
	Recognition and Seating of Messengers	
	Committee on Order of Business Report	Randy Cuchens
	Announcement of Credentials and Tellers Committees	Matt Buckles
	Welcome	Bob Gladney
9:15	Worship through Music	Sanctuary Choir First Baptist Church, Vicksburg
9:20	Report of Committee on Committees	Jim Harrington
9:25	Bible Treasures	Herb Reavis
9:50	Presentations of Resolutions	
9:55	Worship through Music	Gerry Gore
10:00	Business Session: Election of the President	Matt Buckles
10:20	Convention Board Report	Mark Vincent
10:30	Choral Praise	Sanctuary Choir First Baptist Church, Vicksburg
10:35	Christian Action Commission Report	Jimmy Porter
10:50	Concert of Praise	Sanctuary Choir First Baptist Church, Vicksburg
11:00	President's Address	Matt Buckles
	Scripture Reader	Jonathan Sherwin
11:35	Benediction	David White

2nd Session | Tuesday Afternoon | October 28, 2014

1:30	Concert of Praise	Mississippi Singing Churchmen
1:45	Call to Order	Joe Pate
	Congregational Praise	Billy Williams
	Scripture Reading: Mark 1:16-20	Jon Martin
	Discipleship Testimony	Lynn Sandberg
	Opening Prayer	Clay Duck
2:10	Bible Treasures	Herb Reavis
2:35	Concert of Praise	Mississippi Singing Churchmen
2:45	Business Session	Matt Buckles
	Presentation of 2015 Budget	John Pace
	Results of Election as President	
	Election of Convention Officers	
	Presentation of Resolutions	
	Miscellaneous Business	
3:10	Music Feature	Newton County Baptist Association Combined Choirs
3:15	Business Session	Matt Buckles
	Election of Convention Officers	
	Miscellaneous Business	
3:30	Church Planting Report	Eric Smith
3:40	Congregational Praise	Billy Williams
3:45	Missions Mobilization	Ken Rhodes
3:55	Choral Praise	Newton County Baptist Association Combined Choirs
4:05	Convention Sermon	Mark Vincent
4:40	Benediction	Cesie Page

3rd Session | Tuesday Evening | October 28, 2014

8:30	Choral Praise	Combined Choirs
6:35	Call to Order	Matt Buckles
	Final Presentation of Resolutions	
	Congregational Praise and Worship	Slater Murphy
	Scripture Reading: John 21:13-17	Chase Owen
	Discipleship Testimony	Hannah Gay
	Opening Prayer	Greg Spencer
7:00	Choral Praise	Combined Choirs
7:10	Congregational Praise and Worship	Slater Murphy
7:15	Choral Praise	Combined Choirs
7:25	Message	Jim Futral
8:00	Combined Choirs	
8:05	Benediction	Whit Lewis

BUILDING BLOCKS of a BOLD DISCIPLE

teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.
Acts 6:42

Mississippi Baptist Convention
October 28-29, 2014
First Baptist Church, Jackson

4th Session | Wednesday Morning | October 29, 2014

8:30	Call to Order	Donnie Stuart
	Worship through Music	Mississippi Baptist All State Youth Choir and Orchestra
	Scripture Reading: Mark 2:14-17	Jeremy Fortenberry
	Discipleship Testimony	Jose Freyre
	Opening Prayer	Kristopher Smith
8:55	Memorial Service	Bruce Cappleman
9:05	Mississippi Baptist Foundation Report	Daniel Hall
9:15	Introduction of College Presidents	Matt Buckles
9:20	Mississippi College Report	Lee Royce
9:30	Worship through Music	Mississippi Baptist All State Youth Choir and Orchestra
9:35	Bible Treasures	Herb Reavis
10:00	Recognition of Bivocational Pastor of the Year	
10:10	Business Session	Matt Buckles
	Adoption of 2015 Budget	
	Committee on Nominations Report	Allen Simpson
	Time, Place, and Preacher Committee Report	Jim Phillips
	Resolutions Committee Report	Darby Combs
	Miscellaneous Business	Matt Buckles
10:30	Baptist Children's Village Report	Rory Lee
10:40	Music Feature	Mississippi Baptist All State Youth Choir and Orchestra
10:50	Message	Don Wilton
11:30	Closing Remarks	Matt Buckles
11:35	Benediction	Chris Harrison
	Choral Benediction	Mississippi Baptist All State Youth Choir and Orchestra

Messenger cards

Messenger cards for the 179th Mississippi Baptist Convention on Oct. 28-29 at First Church, Jackson, will be mailed directly to the churches the second week of October. Each church will receive the number of cards for which the church is eligible, according to the guidelines of the Constitution. The Mississippi Baptist Convention's constitution states:

Each church in friendly cooperation with the Mississippi Baptist Convention and having contributed to world missions through the Cooperative Program during the preceding convention year shall be entitled to two messengers for the first one hundred members of its membership or fraction thereof. One additional messenger from each church shall be allowed for each additional one hundred members, or major fraction thereof, but no church shall be entitled to more than ten messengers.

Membership information is based on the 2013 Annual Church Profile. For more information, contact MBCB Executive Administration at (801) 292-3210, or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 201. E-mail: mteal@mbcb.org.

On the inside

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From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

What's at stake

Missionaries who are in the areas that are being attacked by ISIS are asking to be showered in prayer. ISIS has taken over the town they are in today. He said ISIS is systematically going house to house to all the Christians and asking the children to denounce Jesus. He said so far not one child has. And so far all have consequently been killed. But not the parents. The UN has withdrawn and the missionaries are on their own. They are determined to stick it out for the sake of the families, even if it means their own deaths.

— E-mailed prayer request

As Islamic terrorism spreads before us at an alarming rate, death and destruction have once again struck the distant reaches of our globe. Frightened and hungry victims have no idea what the future holds.

Not all the endangered missionaries are Southern Baptists, but our folks will be there too. Count on it. They won't be featured in headlines or spotlighted on the nightly television news, but they will be there. In areas where they have to keep their heads down even more than before, they are determined to help the people who don't know Jesus. They have worked hard to get into areas where no Christians are safe.

While the chaos may provide some opportunities for missionaries and volunteers to move around unnoticed, that's not always the case. There are at least three ever-present dangers all of them face, Southern Baptist or not, that should keep us on our knees in prayer around the clock:

■ Many of the areas in the path of ISIS and groups like them are already overwhelmingly Muslim, and more than a few of the areas were locked in civil war for many years with Islamic extremists before this latest deadly outbreak. All relief workers, and especially those from religious organizations, could be targeted by terrorists.

■ Career missionaries and other personnel who may be in these areas risk exposure, expulsion, or worse if their profiles get

too elevated during this crisis. A French relief worker was recently captured and beheaded, along with two American journalists.

■ Volunteers could be denied admittance to any of the countries affected by the Islamic onslaught. Many rump borders have been established, and scrutiny of incoming foreigners continues to increase with each passing week.

We need to understand that Christians are not welcome in many of these countries. As a television commentator put it, "Some of these governments would rather see their children starve before they accept a crumb of bread from the wrong groups." Those "wrong" groups include Christians.

One woman was able to talk to her (missionary) brother briefly by phone. She didn't say it, but I believe she believes it will be their last conversation. She said he just kept asking her to help him know what to do, and do it.

— E-mailed prayer request

Missionaries and their families serve at great physical peril in many parts of the world. At a time when Christians are at historically high risk, we must be very careful in what we say or write.

For example, neither The Baptist Record nor the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board website will identify the countries or specific areas into which missionaries and volunteers will be living or traveling, when doing so could jeopardize their safety or the success of their mission.

Church and association newsletters, bulletins, websites — especially websites — and other publications should be cautious, too.

The Baptist Record will keep Mississippi Baptists informed about the crisis, but with an elevated awareness of what's at stake to help guard the safety and security of the many determined and dedicated workers and volunteers.

Considering what's at stake, you should too.

New approach to vexing issue

No issue flummoxes and frustrates evangelicals in today's culture wars more than that of homosexuality. It seems to many Christians a no-win issue. If we speak about it in any way, the media attempts to marginalize us. If we stay on the sidelines, it feels like we are sitting silent on the Titanic of traditional marriage as it sinks in the sea of cultural chaos.

As an evangelical father, Bible professor, and elder in a local church, I find myself pondering how to navigate these chaotic cultural waters. As evangelical Christians convinced of the biblical plan and theological mandate of traditional marriage, what should we say, think, and do in this world where our views are disregarded, misunderstood, misinterpreted, or impugned as antiquated and intolerant?

While reasoned disapproval can and should be expressed in the right circles and circumstances, we need to realize that homosexual behavior is only going to become more public, more prevalent and more praised — but perhaps the current culture is not an irreparable reality.

I wonder if, as evangelicals, we might take some lessons from the pro-life movement. Early in the pro-life movement, many tried to argue against choice and the pro-abortion arguments. Though these arguments were correct and many times biblically grounded, this strategy of negativity did little to impact the direction of the debate principally because of the shifts in culture and the movement away from biblical authority.

However, in recent years, the pro-life strategy shifted from arguing "against" abortion and to arguing "for" life. Ultrasounds, pro-life crisis pregnancy centers, and science itself seems to be winning the day for the pro-life argument. Studies have shown that Millennials are much more likely to support life than any other cultural issue.

In no way should we shy away from calling homosexuality what it is but at the same time, I wonder if a positive and "grassroots" strategy might prove more effective especially among Millennial Christians who seem to be moving



Guest opinion
with Bryan Cribb

"In other words, instead of focusing public efforts on arguing against homosexuality, constructively promote 'for' biblical marriage."

further away from biblical marriage.

In other words, instead of focusing public efforts on arguing against homosexuality, constructively promote "for" biblical marriage.

For example, evangelical preachers should celebrate the beauty of the biblical metaphor of marriage as rightfully patterned after the relationship of Christ and the church (Ephesians 5:22-33). In this way, we show that marriage is at root a profoundly Gospel issue.

We should also commend the original creation-vision for marriage as demonstrated in Genesis 2. Indeed, is this not what Jesus did when faced with unbiblical views of marriage in His day (Matthew 19:1-12)?

Church leaders should demonstrate healthy marriages in their own lives, purposefully inviting especially younger Christians into their homes to witness their examples. Christian parents should teach and model the principles of biblical manhood and womanhood as well as God's purposes for marriage to their children.

Truly, discipleship on the church and family level must include the issues of marriage and sexuality.

Social media, when used, should trumpet the virtues of biblical marriage — edifying, rather than tearing down. We should be known by our love for one another and for the outcast and perhaps most importantly, we

see CRIBB on p. 11

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Restrictive sign code headed to Supreme Court showdown

WASHINGTON (BP) — The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) religious freedom entity has called for the U.S. Supreme Court to strike down a municipal sign ordinance it says violates a church's free speech and assembly rights.

The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) joined in a friend-of-the-court brief filed Sept. 22 that contends the sign code of Gilbert, Az., discriminates against churches while favoring political and ideological messages. The brief, filed by the Christian Legal Society (CLS), asserts the code is based on a sign's content and therefore abridges the First Amendment's free speech clause.

The high court will hear oral arguments in the case, *Reed v. Town of Gilbert*, in January or thereafter. It is expected to announce an opinion in the significant church-state case before it adjourns early in the summer of 2015.

Lower courts ruled in favor of Gilbert, a town of more than 200,000 in the Phoenix metropolitan area. Gilbert's code restricts the size of "qualifying event" signs, like those for church meetings, to six square feet and the duration of display to 12 hours beforehand.

Yet, the code allows "political" signs to be 32 square feet in size and be displayed 60 days before an election. The code also permits "ideological" signs to be 20 square feet and be exhibited indefinitely, and authorizes homeowners' association signs to be 80 square feet and be posted 60 days before an event.

Good News Community Church, which meets in a public school, challenged Gilbert's sign code. The church, which averages between 25 to 30 adults and four to 10 children in weekly worship, relies on temporary signs to inform the public of its meetings, according to the CLS brief.

Clyde Reed, pastor of the church, said the signs had been "very, very effective" during the 10 years they have been used, the brief stated.

Barrett Duke, the ERLC's vice president for public policy and research, described *Reed v. Town of Gilbert* as a very important First Amendment case.

"By limiting the size of these signs and the duration they can be put out, the town of Gilbert has signaled that it values politics more highly than the spiritual and social well-being of their community," Duke said in written comments for Baptist Press.

"This case also has direct bearing on our convention's church planting efforts," said Duke, who planted a church in the Denver area before joining the ERLC staff. "As a church planter myself, I know very well how absolutely crucial it is for new church starts to be able to put up temporary signs."

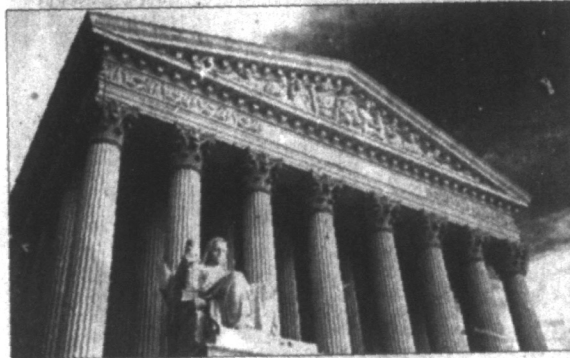
"Without a building, these signs provide one of the primary ways a new church can help the community know it is meeting in their area. This was one of the main ways my new church made its presence known to our community in Denver."

"For the sake of churches and the communities they seek to serve, this ordinance must be overturned."

The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco ruled the differences in Gilbert's code are neutral regarding content because "none draws distinctions based on the particular content of the sign." The appeals court stated, "It makes no difference which candidate is supported, who sponsors the event, or what ideological perspective is asserted."

The code is not based on "disagreement with the message conveyed," according to the Ninth Circuit.

The CLS brief joined by the ERLC contends, however, Gilbert's ordinance "discriminates among noncommercial signs based on subject matter, which is a form of content discrimination." The code discriminates on its face and is subject to "strict scrutiny" regardless of the town's motive in passing it, according to the brief.



U.S. SUPREME COURT - WASHINGTON, D.C.



BIG MOVE — Leon Westerhouse (left) and Keith Fordham, both inductees to the Conference of Southern Baptist Evangelists' Hall of Faith, stand in front of the display now in the Southern Baptist Convention's building in downtown Nashville. (BP photo)

Hall of Faith finds new home in SBC building

NASHVILLE (BP) — The Conference of Southern Baptist Evangelists' Hall of Faith honoring 36 evangelists who "fought the fight" and "kept the faith" has relocated to Nashville.

The Hall of Faith, which had been located at the North American Mission Board near Atlanta, is now on the third floor of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) building. The SBC Executive Committee (EC) unveiled the Hall of Faith's new location during its Sept. 22-23 meeting.

"We are delighted to have this passionate group of soul-winning men and women to be a part of a permanent facility here," Frank Page, EC president, said during his report to EC members.

Page said the Hall of Faith, established in 2007, recognizes evangelists who have impacted countless numbers of people for Christ during their years of service. The relocation is part of a partnership between the Conference of Southern Baptist Evangelists (COSBE), NAMB, the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives (SBHLA) and the Executive Committee.

The SBHLA will now be the official repository for COSBE's non-current records and historical materials and host of the Evangelists' Hall of Faith.

Brian Fossett, an evangelist and former president of COSBE who attended the 2007 rec-

ommendation to establish the Hall of Faith.

"God just laid it on my heart," Fossett said. "I just felt the need [to recognize] men that had invested their life and... went through all the sacrifices... leaving their families on a regular basis and spent their entire lifetime living on faith... for the sole purpose of the harvest to see people saved."

The first class of evangelists was inducted to the Hall of Faith in 2008 in Indianapolis during the SBC's annual meeting. Among those inducted that year: Billy Graham and the late Freddie Gage, who died Sept. 12.

Leon Westerhouse, a music evangelist who also was part of the 2008 class, was on hand to see the Hall of Faith's new home.

"I'm thankful to be a part of it. It's a great thing," said Westerhouse, the first known music evangelist in Alabama during a time when there were only a handful of them across the country.

According to Hall of Faith records, Westerhouse has garnered more than 50 years of full-time music evangelism experience and shared the Gospel in more than 1,400 revivals, crusades, and other evangelistic meetings.

He also has had the opportunity to serve with fellow Hall of Faith inductees Junior Hill and Eddie Martin.

Westerhouse fondly recalled the days when he'd see

150 people saved in one week of a revival.

"Those were great days," Westerhouse, a member of Huffman Church in Birmingham, said. "We don't see those days much anymore... but God is still on the throne and we just keep bearing witness."

Georgia evangelist Keith Fordham, a former president of COSBE, also attended the EC meeting in Nashville. Fordham was inducted to the Hall of Faith this summer along with Franklin Graham.

"I'm thankful our [convention] uses evangelists," Fordham said, sharing how his own decision to follow Christ happened during a revival in 1960.

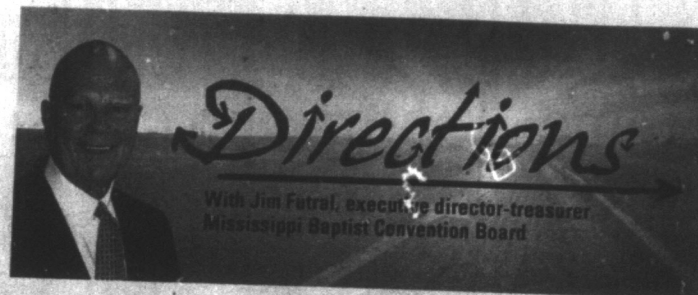
Fordham, a member of Harp's Crossing Church in Fayetteville, Ga., has served in more than 1,500 revivals in the United States and India.

Though some say revivals are a thing of the past, Fordham said they continue to make a difference in churches. This summer he preached at a church that had its first baptisms in 20 years and since then has seen a bump in attendance from 35 to 56.

"We may be worse preachers than others, we may be better than others, but when we go in, people respond," Fordham said. "I've had people that disagreed with me theologically because we're going to have people saved... We're going to follow through in believer's baptism... because we had an evangelist in."

At the heart of what Christ has called us to do in Kingdom work is a sense of urgency. You can see it and hear it in the life of Jesus as he dealt with people or special moments or even his travel schedule. You hear him as he says, "Work ... the night cometh" (John 9:4) or John says, "He must needs go through Samaria" (4:4), or he comes to the final breaths of his life and on either side there was a man, one who wanted to be right with the Lord when he left here. There is urgency surrounding every moment, every event of the cross, but at times in our churches whether in our pulpits or the pews or in the activities we are a part of, we lose or at least have a reduced sense of urgency. We deal with programs and schedules and the events of an activity or a worship service, and sometimes lose sight of the fact that this song or this sermon, this prayer or this gathering is designed so that men, women, boys and girls can have an encounter with God that will transform their lives. Sometimes we lose that sense of urgency because we forget how important what we're doing actually is.

In virtually every area of life, whatever a person may be doing, there is generally a sense of urgency about parts of what they are doing. Maybe it's a football player, and he comes to game time with a sense of urgency that all the practices, all the plans, all the preparation culminates in this encounter, and it is the difference between winning and losing to him. Or maybe it's a singer who has prepared and prepared, memorized the song,



The Urgency of Our Work

knows every note, who finally stands on stage and everything must happen in the next two or three minutes. Yes, there is a pressure that builds and builds and an urgency that it be done now. Or walk into any particular discipline or profession and you will find in those peak moments, the urgency is there. The doctor, the teacher, the law enforcement officer, the politician, the car dealer, the store clerk, all have a moment that may be a high point of urgency that something has to be done and now is when it happens. In kingdom work it happens week after week and often day after day, and we begin to lose our sensitivity toward its urgency.

Some years ago a good friend who was an attorney had serious heart trouble and had to have major heart surgery. He was an attorney by pro-

fession and a good attorney on top of that. The surgery went well, his recuperation was now in process, and he and I sat down and talked one day. He looked worried and he looked weary and I asked him how it was going. He said, "Well, I'm doing okay." He said the doctor told him he had to change his eating habits and he'd already lost some weight. The doctor told him he had to exercise and he had gotten into that pretty good. The doctor told him he had to lower his stress level, and that part he was having a real problem with. He told me that he didn't see a way that he could lower his stress, because when you stand before the jury or the judge you have got to have things together and you have got to be on target and know what you're doing to present the case. I said, "Well, I certainly understand." He looked at

me and said, "No, you don't." I said, "Yes, I really do." He said, "I know you speak a lot and preach a lot but that's not the same as what I do." I said, "Well tell me about what you do." He said, "Cases that I argue before the court, if I lose or win it's the difference in millions of dollars for my clients and maybe even for me." I said, "I understand." He said, "Well, you really don't." I said, "I'm sorry but you're the one who doesn't understand." He looked at me kind of strange and I said, "I'm serious. If you win or lose it's the difference in millions of dollars for someone. The case I argue Sunday after Sunday and week after week, day after day, if I win or lose, it's the difference in someone's eternal destiny." This man who was in church all the time kind of looked surprised and said, "I've never thought about it like that."

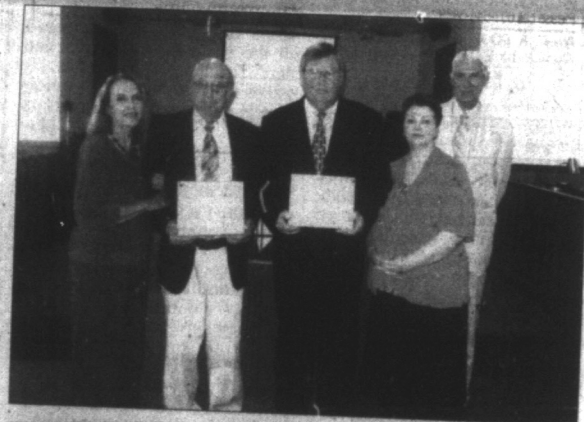
This Sunday as you preach or teach, sing or carefully listen, remember that what is taking place here has eternal consequences and maybe someone listening to your message from the Lord is struggling with that decision of what will I do with Jesus. It is probably safe to say that everyone who comes to church or Bible study or to a church event arrives there with burdens, unsolvable problems, guilt, the crushing consequences of sin or just the emptiness and longing of wanting to be right with God. God has allowed you to be a part of their lives. That He will bless you and use you, is my prayer.

The author can be contacted at directions@mbcb.org.

Just for the Record



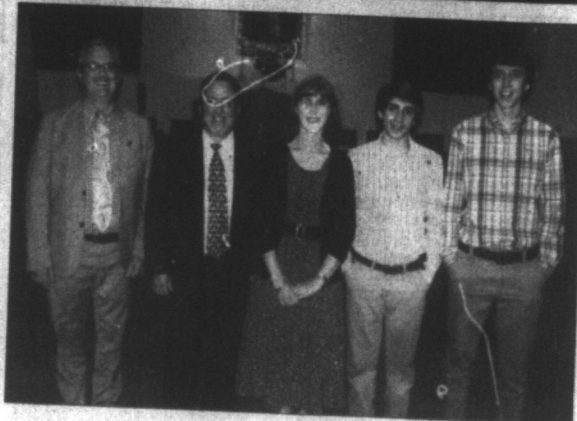
(TOP LEFT) The children's ministry of **RAYMOND ROAD CHURCH, JACKSON**, baked and sold cookies to raise money for the Margaret Lackey State Missions Offering, raising \$165.



(TOP RIGHT) **CLIFF TEMPLE CHURCH, NATCHEZ**, recently ordained two new deacons. Shown, left to right: Lisa & Roger Heard, James & Susan Woodard and pastor Russell Wagoner.



(BOTTOM LEFT) **FIRST CHURCH, KOSCIUSKO**, held a deacon ordination service Sept. 21. Shown are Wanda Fancher, Tim Fancher, pastor Barry Corbett, Breck Richardson, and Laura Richardson.



(BOTTOM RIGHT) **CENTRAL CHURCH, MCCOMB**, ordained Tom Gonsalves into the ministry, Sept. 14. Shown are pastor Justin Woulard, Gonsalves and family.

Revivals & Homecomings

► **Calvary Church, Louisville:** 100th anniversary, Oct. 5; services, 10:30 a.m., followed by lunch; special music; Junior Davis, speaker.

► **Crestview Church, Petal:** Revival, Oct. 5-9; Sun., 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Thurs., 7 p.m.; Tracey Hipps, speaker; Answered Prayer, music.

► **Clear Creek Church, Shubuta:** 150th anniversary, month of October; Oct. 5th, old-fashioned Sunday with lunch; Oct. 12, anniversary celebration with cake and punch, 3 p.m.; Oct. 19, hymn celebration; Oct. 26, youth Sunday with speaker Brent Graham and special music provided by youth.

► **New Hope Church, Foxworth:** Homecoming, Oct. 5; service, 10:30 a.m., followed by covered dish lunch, and slide show from Cade Campbell, speaker.

► **East Union Church, Magnolia:** 122nd homecoming, Oct. 5; Sunday School high attendance day, 9:45 a.m.; worship, 11 a.m. with building fund offering and lunch; Jim Futral, speaker; Danny Creel, music.

► **Moselle Memorial Church, Moselle:** Homecoming, Oct. 5; services, 10 a.m., followed by lunch.

► **First Church, Lauderdale:** 41st homecoming, Oct. 5; Sunday School, 9:30 a.m.; services, 10:45 a.m., followed by fellowship meal; Jerry Bishop, speaker.

► **Robinson Church, Saucier:** 25th anniversary, Oct. 5; services, 10:30 a.m., followed by lunch and concert with the Bibles Quartet.

► **Bethel Church, Newton:** 175th anniversary, Oct. 5; service, 10:30 a.m., followed by fellowship meal; Robert Rowzee, speaker; Jerry Jones, worship leader. Revival, Oct. 6-8; 7 p.m. nightly; Mark Vincent, Brian Rushing, and Jim Futral, speakers.

► **Friendship Church, Aberdeen:** Revival, Oct. 5-8; high attendance Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.; Sun., 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon.-Wed., 7 p.m.; Junior Ritchie, speaker; Scott Wilemon, music.

► **Enon Church, Grenada:** Homecoming, Oct. 5; service, 11 a.m., followed by lunch and singing; Fletcher Moorman, speaker; Ricky Harris, music and pastor.

► **Harmony Church, Brookhaven:** Homecoming, Oct. 5, 10:30 a.m.; Clarence Young, speaker; The Revelations, music.

Pulpit Freedom Sunday across U.S. set for Oct. 5

ASHEVILLE, N.C.(BP) — An atheist group reached a settlement last month with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) over stronger enforcement of policies against "church politicking," and at least one religious freedom group voiced optimism that the IRS investigation could be "a good thing" in the long run.

Allie (ADF) has been campaigning to overturn the portion of the tax code that prohibits nonprofit organizations from "intervening in political campaigns" as a condition of their tax-exempt status.

To achieve that, ADF has organized the annual Pulpit Freedom Sunday since 2008, for which it encourages pastors to exercise their First Amendment right to free speech — including political speech — from the pulpit and send copies of their sermons to the IRS.

On Oct. 5, more than 2,000 pastors are expected to participate in Pulpit Freedom Sunday, during which they will "plainly speak scriptural truth about the qualifications of candidates for public office, regardless of candidates' political affiliation," according to the project's website.

Once the IRS attempts to take away a church's tax-exempt status, ADF will represent the church free of charge and seek to declare the law unconstitutional, said Eric Stanley, ADF senior counsel.

The IRS has yet to bite at ADF's challenge but in November 2012, the Freedom from Religion Foundation (FFRF) filed suit, criticizing the IRS for not enforcing elec-

"Churches are tax-exempt as a matter of constitutional right because there is no surer way to destroy the free exercise of religion than to begin taxing it. That exemption cannot be conditioned on the surrender of constitutional rights."

Eric Stanley

Alliance Defending Freedom senior counsel

tioning restrictions against churches and religious organizations. As a result of the agency's non-enforcement, "churches and religious organizations have been blatantly and deliberately flaunting the electioneering restrictions," the suit claims, alleging election-year violations by The Billy Graham Evangelical Association and several churches.

The IRS hasn't always had the power to censor what is said from the pulpit, Stanley said in a recent radio interview. The law was introduced by then-U.S. Senate Minority Leader Lyndon B. Johnson as an amendment to a tax overhaul bill in 1954.

It was reported that Johnson hoped the bill would silence two powerful, secular nonprofits that were opposing his reelection in Texas.

"The Johnson Amendment was slipped into the tax code with no debate, no analysis, no committee hearings, no anything," Stanley said, "and since that time, the IRS has been monitoring and censoring what a pastor says from the pulpit."

The IRS currently has a moratorium on investigating any nonprofits for alleged

political activities, including churches, due to an ongoing congressional probe into the agency's targeting of conservative groups' tax-exempt applications with unwarranted examinations. As soon as the suspension is lifted, the IRS will be able to use "adopted procedures for reviewing, evaluating, and determining whether to initiate church investigations," FFRF said in its press release.

On July 22, ADF used the Freedom of Information Act to petition the IRS for documentation regarding the agency's new procedures for investigating churches. Stanley said the agency's decision not to make the procedures public fuels more suspicion of the already mistrusted organization.

Stanley believes FFRF's latest win could lead to a legal resolution that benefits ministries.

"Churches are tax-exempt as a matter of constitutional right because there is no surer way to destroy the free exercise of religion than to begin taxing it," Stanley said. "That exemption cannot be conditioned on the surrender of constitutional rights."

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LIBERTY HILL BAPTIST CHURCH IN POPE, MS IS LOOKING FOR A PART TIME STUDENT MINISTER. Please direct resumes and questions to stacey.bowden@yahoo.com

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DERMA BAPTIST CHURCH IN DERMA, MS IS SEEKING A FULL-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC & EDUCATION. Resumes can be emailed to dermabaptist@tds.net or mailed to PO Box 67 Derma, MS 38839.

Baptist teaching assistant killed while serving in Chile



HAGAN

GEORGETOWN, Ky. (BP) — Erica Faith Hagan, 22, a May 2014 graduate of Baptist-affiliated Georgetown College in Kentucky, was apparently murdered Sept. 6 while serving as a teaching assistant at a Baptist school in Chile.

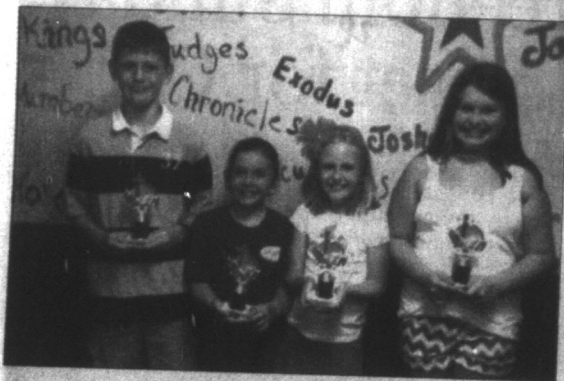
Hagan was killed in the southern Chilean city of Temuco where she was a teaching assistant at the Colegio Bautista, a Baptist elementary and secondary school of 800 students founded in the 1920s with the help of Southern Baptists.

Georgetown College has an

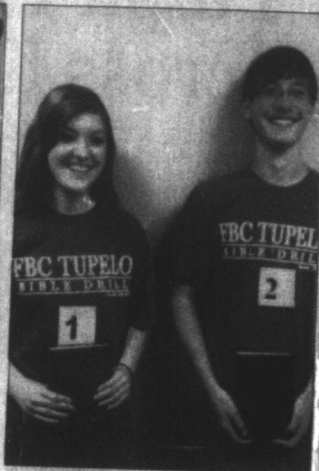
ongoing relationship with Colegio Bautista de Temuco. Despite Hagan's death, the college will continue to partner with schools overseas, campus minister Bryan Langlands told the Recorder.

According to the Western Recorder, newjournal of the Kentucky Baptist Convention, Chilean authorities arrested a security guard at the college Sept. 13 in connection with Hagan's death in her on-campus apartment where she had been struck by an object several times.

Just for the Record



PLEASANT HOME CHURCH, JONES COUNTY ASSOCIATION, recognizes Bible drillers Benjamin Cooper, Karlie Anne Dickens, Bella Flowers, and Marlee Pierce, who all scored superior or excellent Aug. 10 in church drills.



(AT LEFT) FIRST CHURCH, TUPELO, recognizes its student Bible drillers. Shown are Madison Young and Ben Russell. **(AT RIGHT) FIRST CHURCH, TUPELO**, recognizes its children's Bible drillers. Front row-left to right: Annlee Grayson, Kinsley Alexander, Luke Angle, Mary Scruggs, and Peyton Lindsey; back row-left to right: Scarlett Leckie, John Braxton Daughdrill, Caitlyn Carnathan, Seth Gammill, Mary Esther Leckie, and Matthew Gillis.



NEW BETHEL CHURCH, CARROLL COUNTY, held a 3rd Sunday night singing in September. Shown are participants Shirley McCrory, Richard Corder, Judy Lemley Corder, and Melanie Sansing Shelton.



FREEDOM CHURCH, LAUREL, recognized E. J. Nowell and Steve Hodge for years of service as deacons and in other areas of the church. Shown are Nowell and Hodge with Tommy Davis, pastor.



Sunday School Perfect Attendance Awards were given out at **BEULAH CHURCH, DECATUR**, September 21. Pictured left to right, front row are Billy E. Williams-four years; Mary Ann Kelly-three years; Nathan Kelly-three years; Shirley Harrison-three years; Laverne Chaney-37 years; back row left to right are Alan Kelly-two years; Isham Snowden-two years; Barbara J. Harrison-32 years; and Elton Bryan-21 years. Not pictured is Will Motley-37 years and Neal Motley - 45 years.

In other Church News:

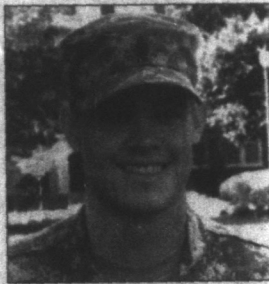
- **First Church, Runnelstown**, is hosting Karen Peck and New River in concert Oct. 10, 7 p.m. Love offering.
- **Wheeler Grove Church, Corinth**, is hosting Judgment House Oct. 10 - 12, 6:30 p.m. nightly.



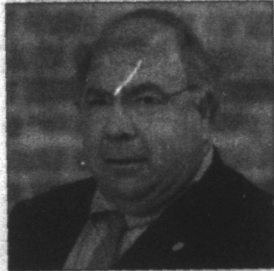
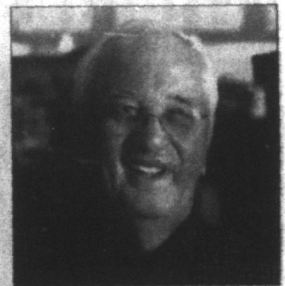
TOOMSUBA CHURCH, TOOMSUBA, held an autumn Meet Jesus at the Lake outreach and fellowship event Sept. 20 at Lake Tom Bailey, Toomsuba.

College News

Grant Whittington won national honors in Army ROTC at **MISSISSIPPI COLLEGE**. The 21-year-old son of a U.S. Marine attended the Leadership Training Course at Fort Knox, Ky., and finished as the nation's No. 1 Cadet. It earned him an ROTC scholarship and a contract to sign on with the Army.



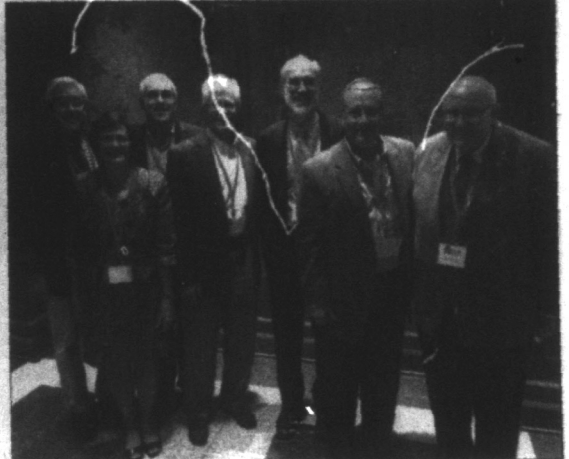
Don "Papa" Jordan has been honored as **MISSISSIPPI COLLEGE'S** Alumnus of the Year. A 1951 MC School of Business graduate, Jordan will be presented the prestigious honor at this fall's Homecoming Dinner. The October 17 program at Anderson Hall that Friday evening begins at 6 p.m. Jordan and his son, Trey, founded the popular family-friendly Holiday Deli & Ham Tennessee restaurant chain. A thriving franchise operation, Pimento's Café, became an instant hit with faculty, staff, students and alums on the Mississippi College campus, a few steps from Olde Towne Clinton. A Kosciusko native, Jordan earned his MBA at Harvard, making him the first in MC history to achieve that distinction at the Ivy League school in Cambridge, Massachusetts.



Ralph Barnes, chairman of the **MISSISSIPPI COLLEGE** Board of Trustees Building Committee, has received the school's Award of Excellence. Barnes was instrumental in the building of a three-story parking garage, a new bookstore, Pimento's Café, improvements at Robinson-Hale Stadium, and the baseball team's Rice Field House.



Katy Thompson, Birmingham, Ala., has been chosen as **MISSISSIPPI COLLEGE'S** Young Alumna of the Year. She serves with Impact 360 Gap Year, a Christian ministry based in Pine Mountain, Georgia. As enrollment manager with Impact 360 Gap Year, Katy networks with various churches and ministries across the USA. She's constantly searching for students in the age range of 18 to 20 who seek to spend a year studying important topics in their faith. At the same time, the students serve their community, receive leadership training and travel to month-long mission trips in Brazil.



WILLIAM CAREY UNIVERSITY President Tommy King, far right, has been elected chairman-elect of the Consortium for Global Education, a nonprofit organization committed to quality programs of international education. King's election occurred during the consortium's 27th annual meeting September 17-19 at Baylor University in Waco, Texas. The consortium, founded in 1987, works to internationalize higher education through student and faculty global participation. Members of the consortium are located in 22 states, with affiliate members representing key national universities throughout the world.

MISSIONS MOBILIZATION

PRE-PASTOR'S CONFERENCE LUNCHEON

COMPLIMENTARY MEAL FOR PASTOR'S CONFERENCE ATTENDEES

DATE:
MONDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2014

TIME:
11:00 A.M. - 1:00 P.M.

LOCATION:
FBC JACKSON, CLC AUDITORIUM

SPECIAL GUEST:
BEN BARFIELD

NORTH AMERICAN MISSION BOARD,
SEND CITY COORDINATOR - LAS VEGAS

REGISTRATION FOR THIS LUNCHEON IS REQUIRED.
PLEASE REGISTER YOUR PLANS TO ATTEND BY EMAILING
BEVERLY BRIDGES AT BBRIDGES@MBCO.ORG.

DEADLINE TO REGISTER IS
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2014.



MISSISSIPPI COLLEGE trustee and Alabama businessman Philip "Fred" Hahn, Sr. is the latest recipient of the university's Order of the Golden Arrow Award. The Order of the Golden Arrow honors alumni or friends of the Baptist-affiliated institution making outstanding achievements in their professions. It recognizes exceptional performance or leadership beyond the ordinary. A 1952 MC School of Business graduate, Hahn will receive the honor at the university's Homecoming Dinner on October 17.

In other College News:

► **Mississippi College** earned top billing as the home of the best online learning program in the Magnolia State. TheBestSchools.org selected MC for that honor based on factors such as academic excellence, courses and degree programs, faculty strengths and reputation. Schools with the best online programs in their states, the survey said, included the University of Arkansas, Auburn, Penn State, Missouri, the University of Memphis, South Carolina, Oregon State and Liberty University based in Virginia. MC offers online education in such areas as business, nursing, health administration, communication, paralegal studies, and the administration of justice, including Homeland Security.

► The **William Carey University** Board of Trustees has approved a Doctor of Physical Therapy program at the university's Hattiesburg campus. At their regular September 4 meeting, the Trustees unanimously approved the recommendation of WCU President Dr. Tommy King to initiate efforts to raise \$1.5 million in startup funds for the program. The opening of the program will depend upon WCU's ability to raise the funds. Mississippi is the only state in the region with only one physical therapy school. The new program's initial class would include 30 students. The national average salary for physical therapists is \$79,860, with practitioners in Mississippi earning higher than this average.

► Victory Media, the leading media entity for military personnel transitioning into civilian life, has named **William Carey University** a Military Friendly® School for the sixth consecutive year. The designation is awarded to the top 15 percent of colleges, universities and trade schools in the country that are doing the most to embrace military students and to dedicate resources to ensure their success in the classroom and after graduation.

Winter spurs concern for refugees from ISIS



NOWHERE TO GO — Forcibly displaced Yazidi Kurds camp under a bridge in a city in northern Iraq. Islamic terrorists have raided cities and executed religious minorities and even other Muslims, forcing families to flee to places of relative safety but little comfort. (BP photo courtesy of Baptist Global Relief)

KURDISTAN (BP) — Seasons are changing and summer's heat is passing, but forcibly displaced families in northern Iraq are worried because winter will soon bring bitter cold that many of them may not survive.

When Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) extremists forced them to flee their homes, some Iraqis were able to find refuge in schools, empty buildings, or apartment complexes. Many others, however, are exposed to the elements and will be in grave danger when wintertime temperatures drop into the teens.

"Shelter is lacking or inadequate," said Abraham Shepherd, who directs work in the Middle East for Baptist Global Response (BGR). "People are living in their cars, under doorsteps, in the open fields, with mainly tarps covering them. People know winter will come quickly on them, and they need to be ready if ever you can be ready in those conditions."

Shepherd and local partners working with BGR delivered relief supplies to more than a dozen families who had taken shelter under one highway overpass.

"Each of those families had at least seven members. The kids were just being kids, sliding on the concrete slope," Shepherd said. "The families are living under the bridge. They made the

ground their home. They are planning, when winter comes, maybe they'll put a tarp on each side to try to keep warm."

Farther down the road, the relief team found another group that had taken shelter in makeshift tents under a few trees. Even in some of the buildings the team visited, people were sleeping on the concrete floor with thin blankets or mats underneath them.

"It's already cold at night in Kurdistan," Shepherd said, "and their biggest concern now is, 'What will happen to us in the winter?'"

In addition to food baskets provided by the Southern Baptist hunger offering, Global Hunger Relief, BGR is distributing supplies intended to help people survive the winter such as coats and rubber boots, blankets, mattresses, and carpets to isolate the cold, as well as heating stoves and fuel.

The families being helped are Kurdish Yazidis and other minorities, as well as Iraqi Christians, some of whom are members of the response team and were themselves forcibly displaced from their own homes.

"When you are with them, you see they are confused, defeated," Shepherd said. "There is panic and fear in their eyes. I can't but offer, 'Our God will help us through, as he is faithful.'"

Teen escapee recalls chilling kidnapping by Boko Haram

WASHINGTON (BP) — Saa (not her real name) sat with other schoolgirls piled on the back of the large truck as it made its way past a Nigerian village in the dark of night.

"We are moving, we are moving, then some of our girls start jumping down from the trucks. Then I told my friend that I decided to jump down from the trucks, that I'd rather die, that my parents have my coffin buried, than to go with them, because we don't know where we are going. Then she said okay, she would jump with me."

Saa and her friend, two of the 300 girls Boko Haram militants awakened and violently kidnapped from a Chibok boarding school on April 15, courageously escaped as the caravan of trucks continued down the road.

Saa recounted her ordeal during a Sept. 19 panel discussion hosted by the Hudson Institute in Washington and supported by the Jubilee Campaign for Religious Freedom.

The 18-year-old Christian is a member of the Nigeria Church of the Brethren, where her father was a pastor.

Jumping from the truck, her friend injured her leg and was unable to walk. Saa helped her

through the forest to a tree, where the two slept for the night. "She can't move," Saa said. "We don't know what to do. Then I decide to go and look for help. ... I went and I met a (Muslim) shepherd."

Saa asked him for help, but he expressed fear and recommended they wait along the road and seek help from others who might pass by on their way to market.

Then we said, 'But sir, you know that the bad people follow this way. Not any person will come to the market today because they were afraid. ... Then he decided to help us, and he carried my friend on his bicycle.'

With the farmer's help, Saa and her friend returned to Chibok. "When we come home, I met my parents crying. [All my] relatives are crying because what happened. Then, after that, the time they saw me, they were happy, they were jumping, because of what's happening."

As many as 75 girls escaped during the days and weeks following the kidnapping, with perhaps 220 still missing. At least one of the girls has been killed as a suicide bomber, Nigerian American attorney and panelist Emmanuel Ogebe said.

Nigerian security officials are

reportedly engaged in talks to free the girls, according to news reports. The International Committee of the Red Cross has assisted in talks with Nigerian security officials and Boko Haram militants to negotiate the freedom of the girls in exchange for the release of Boko Haram prisoners, the Telegraph reported Sept. 18.

No deal has been reached. The talks were held in one of Nigeria's maximum security prisons where some Boko Haram leaders are being held.

Since Saa escaped within 24 hours of being kidnapped, she was not able to learn where the girls were being taken but she does recall that the jihadists questioned some of the girls about their faith, particularly three girls who would not fit on the trucks and were allowed to walk back home.

Among them was one of Saa's Christian friends who denied her faith. "I was shocked and I was very sad that she said that she was a Muslim," Saa said. "I'm thinking at that time, that maybe if they killed her... what was she going to say to the Lord in Heaven? I was shocked and I was very sad at that time."

Within a month of the kidnapping, Boko Haram released



TELLING HER STORY — Saa (not her real name), an 18-year-old Christian schoolgirl from Chibok, Nigeria, recounted her escape from Boko Haram Islamic jihadists after they kidnapped her and 300 of her classmates in April. (BP photo)

a video of girls dressed in Muslim hijabs who were reportedly the same girls kidnapped from Chibok. Saa confirmed that at least one of her classmates was on the video.

"Yes, they were Christian girls, because the one that stands at the front, she was a Christian, and she was... in our FCS (Fellowship of Christian Students)," Saa said, her eyes tearing, "and she's the one standing in the front saying all rubbish things of Muslims."

Boko Haram is adopting ISIS tactics, said Nina Shea, director of Hudson Institute's Center for Religious Freedom, and has established Islamic caliphates in much of northeastern Nigeria.

"As far as the killings go ...

they're occurring on a constant basis as Boko Haram becomes more well-armed and grows," Shea said. "The Catholic Bishop (Oliver) Doeme of Borno today (Sept. 19) is quoted in the Vatican Press as saying that there is clear confirmation that Islamization is occurring in northeastern Nigeria and probably with the intent of targeting all of Nigeria."

"He acknowledged that Muslims are attacked as well, those who do not abide by Boko Haram's dictates are targeted, but that Christians are bearing the brunt of this. What is going on is very brutal religious cleansing and it's occurring as we speak... in northeastern Nigeria."

179th Annual Meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Convention October 28-29, 2014 | First Church, Jackson

Area Accommodations

Hotel/Motel Rates, effective October 26-28, 2014

Note: Cutoff date for the rates listed is October 5, 2014. Rates will go up after that date. When you ask for reservations be sure to tell them you are attending the Mississippi Baptist Convention annual meeting.

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per night + 9% tax
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Breakfast \$5.00 per person

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110 Bass Pro Drive
Pearl, MS 39288
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per night + 9% tax
Breakfast - Varied price
from menu

Preschool Care

Preschool care will be available for children by pre-registration only, ages birth through five, at First Church, Jackson, during the Mississippi Baptist Pastors' Conference and the Mississippi Baptist Convention annual meeting, from noon on Oct. 27 through the close of the annual meeting on Oct. 29.

To pre-register, call Michelle Sansing, childcare coordinator, at (601) 949-1997. All children must be pre-registered by the close of business on October 20.

The preschool departments are located on the street level off North State Street. Following are the childcare procedures:

1. Pre-register at the telephone number listed above, giving name and age of each child, the parent(s), and the home church.
2. Pick up a security card for each child on arrival.
3. Be sure all belongings are labeled.
4. For infants, leave a time schedule for feeding.
5. Leave the children no earlier than 15 minutes before the beginning of a session and pick them up no later than 15 minutes after the close of the session.

Children may remain in the preschool area during the Convention lunch break on Tuesday, if parents provide a sack lunch.

October heralds Pastor Appreciation Month across SBC

NEW ORLEANS (BP) — With two jobs, a pastorate, and a full slate of courses at New Orleans Seminary (NOBTS), pastor Toby Brogden was feeling overwhelmed and exhausted when he showed up for a class last month.

"Look, I am stretched just as tight as a rubber band," Brogden, who pastors Grace Church in New Orleans, told classmates. "I feel like I'm about to break. We have to get away. We have to get a break. We're stressed to the max, so you all just pray for that."

The next day Brogden slipped in late to Johnny Hunt's Timothy-Barnabas conference on the NOBTS campus and didn't sign up for a drawing for a couples getaway from the North American Mission Board (NAMB) pastor support ministry. Fortunately for Brogden, someone else put his name in the drawing.

He was shocked when his name was called. "One of the guys sitting next to me is a classmate at seminary. He leaned over to me and said, 'Isn't it great when God answers our prayers fast?'"

Through its Send Network website, sendnetwork.com/pastor-appreciation, NAMB is providing churches with tools to honor their pastors in a similar manner for Pastor Appreciation Month in October.

Brogden noted that while he appreciated the gift from NAMB, gifts from church members have provided special and unique boosts throughout the years. When he served as the pastor of a church in Tennessee about a year ago, the congregation held special dinners for him during October. Church members brought in thank-you notes that included gift cards.

"When you have someone handwrite a card — it doesn't even need to have a gift card in it, but it's a hand-written card from his heart to yours — it just encourages you," Brogden said.

NAMB's website provides church members with an opportunity to purchase bed and breakfast stays for their pastor and his wife at 25-50% off the regular price. Churches will find a "50 Ways to Honor Your Pastor" poster on the website. Church leaders can also introduce their pastors to two NAMB-sponsored smartphone apps designed to help them "refresh" their spiritual lives and their marriages.

"When you have someone handwrite a card — it doesn't even need to have a gift card in it, but it's a hand-written card from his heart to yours — it just encourages you."

Toby Brogden

**pastor of
Grace Church in
New Orleans**

Members of Great Hills Church in Austin, Texas, used NAMB's material last year to honor their pastor, Danny Forshee.

"Our deacon ministry emphasis is serving our church, supporting our pastor, and bringing unity to the church body," said Andy Spencer, chair of deacons at Great Hills. "During pastor appreciation, we as a deacon body collected money to send our pastor and his wife on a weekend away. We gave them the information on Christian Hospitality Network who offered a discount to pastors for pastor appreciation month."

The deacons didn't let the appreciation end there. In August, the church celebrated his 50th birthday by presenting him with 50 cards and 50 gifts and challenged members to perform 50 random acts of kindness in 50 days in his honor.

The purpose of the materials offered on the NAMB website is to help spur on similar efforts to develop a culture of appreciation in churches throughout the Southern Baptist Convention.

"Often pastors feel like they're in a NASCAR race," said Michael Lewis, NAMB's executive director for pastoral care and development. "It's hard to manage it all. You hit the gas and you just go, go, go."

On October 1, NAMB launched a pastor care telephone line in partnership with Focus on the Family. Struggling pastors who call the line will be offered resources and referrals to licensed counselors who can assist during times of crisis.

NAMB notes that all calls are confidential. The phone number is (844) PASTOR1, or 1-844-727-8671, and can be reached weekdays between 8 a.m.-10 p.m. ET.

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MICVCR WKY CK RVL RN.

FDNK BDLV: RJUKRS-BDLV

Clue: J = W

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Luke 24:39

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Abedini letter to daughter: Jesus is being glorified

NASHVILLE (BP) — As Christians in the United States and 32 foreign countries hold vigils to pray for pastor Saeed Abedini and other persecuted believers, Abedini's wife Naghmeh has released a letter he wrote just two weeks ago from prison in Iran.

"Jesus allows me to be kept here for His glory," he wrote to his eight-year-old daughter Rebekka Grace on her birthday two weeks ago. "I know that you question why you have prayed so many times for my return and yet I am not home yet. Now there is a big WHY in your mind you are asking: WHY Jesus isn't answering your prayers and the prayers of all of the people around the world praying for my release and for me to be home with you and our family."

"The answer to the WHY is WHO. WHO is control? LORD JESUS CHRIST is in control."

Naghmeh Abedini read the letter at the official launch of the prayer vigils Sept. 25 at 6 p.m. outside the White House. The vigil was attended by hundreds, including evangelist Franklin Graham.

More than 500 prayer vigils were scheduled through Sept. 26 at various times in conjunction with the vigil Naghmeh Abedini organized through the Be Heard Project, an initiative of the American Center for Law and Justice.

Vigils were scheduled at government buildings, schools, public squares and churches of various Christian denominations, among them First Church of Clover, S.C. There, pastor Dave Stanford encouraged members and guests to stand firm in intercessions for suffering believers around the world.

Stanford's prayer for Abe-

dini was first for healing, he said. "We have read that he's been beaten and had internal injuries and minimal care, and then for his protection as he continues to be incarcerated but for his deliverance [that] the Lord would move on those who have the authority to bring about his release."

Members of Stanford's congregation gave brief perspectives on Christian persecution in Nigeria, North Korea, Iraq, and Somalia. Stanford plans to remember the plight of the persecuted in regular pastoral prayer to keep it on the hearts of congregants, he told Baptist Press.

The service at the church drew about 30 members and visitors, including the pastor of a nearby Associate Reformed Presbyterian church.

Abedini is serving an eight-year sentence imposed Jan. 27, 2013, on charges he threatened national security by planting house churches in Iran years earlier. He had been under house arrest since July,

2012, and imprisoned since Sept. 26, 2012.

Abedini has faced death threats and beatings in prison and received inadequate medical care, according to news reports. He has been unable to see his wife and two children.

In Abedini's letter, he encouraged his daughter to learn from his experience. "I desire for you to learn important lessons during these trying times. Lessons that you carry now and for the rest of your life. God is in control of the whole world and everything that is happening in it is for His good purpose, for His glory, and will be worked out for our good."

The full letter is available at media.aclj.org/pdf/pastor-saeed-letter-rebekka-her-8th-birthday.pdf.

In an interview with CNN's Christiane Amanpour posted on the network's website Sept. 25, Iran President Hassan Rouhani claimed Abedini has been treated fairly by Iran's justice system.



Naghmeh (left) and Saeed Abedini in happier times. (BP photo)

"But the bottom line is that our aim is for the laws to be respected at every step of the way. If they do go through trial, their trial be fairly executed for them to have access to every legal defense allowed under the law, proper defen-

sive representation through qualified attorneys," he told Amanpour, "and we do hope that their families can gain the certainty that fairness and justice will be employed towards the cases and case files of their loved ones."



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Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs must be submitted electronically via e-mail, as attachments in JPEG format. Hard copy photographs mailed through the postal service will not be accepted. Photographs must be clear, sharp, and well-lit. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. Photographs containing inappropriate gestures and objectionable clothing will not be published. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items that do not reproduce well on newsprint are generally not publishable.

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Truth is not relative.

Find it in the One who is the way, truth, and life.

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life.

From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

Secured with Confidence • Hebrews 4:14-5:6

Christ's ascension brought Him back to His Father, back to his place in glory. The writer of Hebrews refers to this as "passing through the heavens." Ephesians 4:9-10 also speaks in detail about Christ's incarnation and ascension. "In saying, 'He ascended,' what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? 10 He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things." Hebrews is a great theological expansion into exactly what Christ did as he "passed through the heavens," securing our salvation, once and for all.

Confidence (4:14-16) - "After terrifying us, the Apostle now comforts us," comments Luther; "after pouring wine into our wound, he pours in oil." (Hebrews, Hughes, 169). When Luther speaks of John "terrifying us," he is referring to the preceding verses (4:11-13) where the Word of God is described as "living and active...piercing...all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account." This forensic ability of the Word of God to expose every sin of humanity sounds painful, full of affliction. However, God has provided someone that can help us through this forensic judgment of the Word of God, Jesus Christ! Jesus can sympathize with us because he

was tempted in every respect as we are yet without sin. "From first to last he was being put to the test, whether by enticements to self-concern, popular acclaim, and ambition for power when assailed by Satan in the wilderness, or by the temptation in the garden to draw back rather than go through the dreadful ordeal that lay before him, or by the taunt hurled at him even as



Explore the Bible
with Shelby Hazard

he hung in agony on the cross: If you are the Son of God, come down from that cross." (Hebrews, Hughes, 168). Christ is able to help us because he lived and was tempted as a man and yet, fully God and without sin.

16 Let us then with confidence draw near...In the old system of Judaism, only the High Priest could enter the holy of holies and be near to the presence of God, now through Christ, the entire priesthood of believers may draw near to God through their faith in Christ (Rom. 8) through prayer, reading the Scripture, private and cor-

porate worship and regular Christian service. The mercy seat is no longer behind a curtain, approachable by only one man, but is high on a hill called Golgotha open for the entire world of those who believe to draw near.

Found in Christ (5:1-6) - The point here is Christ's fulfillment/surpassing of the Levitical law's requirements for the High Priest. Christ was chosen from among men and appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, offering gifts and sacrifices

(his own body) for sins. Christ deals gently with us because he sympathizes with us but Christ was NOT beset with weakness. Christ did NOT have to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as he had NONE, but gave himself for us. Christ did NOT take this honor for himself, God appointed Him to the office. Finally, Psalm 2:7 (You are my Son) and 110:4 (order of Melchizedek) are combined to explain two realities:

"The reappearance of Psalm 2:7 recalls the argument of 1:1-13 with 'its emphasis on the absolute supremacy of the Son and the salvation he came to provide', and draws attention to the significance of Christ's enthronement and the manifestation of his Sonship through resurrection-ascension. The function of Psalm 110:4 is to show that Jesus was directly called to the priesthood by God. This text will be picked up again and again to substantiate the argument on scriptural grounds that Jesus is a heavenly high priest whose priesthood is everlasting. By his welding together these two texts, the author has demonstrated the vital connection between Jesus as Son and as high priest for the Christology of Hebrews. He who is the perfect Son of God from the beginning becomes the perfect high priest for his people." (Hebrews, O'Brien, Logos, PNT)

Christ makes it possible for us to approach the Father with confidence. He knows our limits and deepest needs, being sensitive as we approach the Father. By showing God's grace and mercy to others, we demonstrate Christ to a watching world.

Hazard is pastor of Woodland Church, Columbus.

Connected in Service • Ephesians 5:15-21

Pie charts. They come in handy for checking such things as percentages, progress toward a goal, and comparing past business activities to current ones. When I'm engaging in a weight-loss regimen, I can journal my food in a favorite on-line site, and then check a pie-chart to see if my distribution of protein, fats and carbs are in the right balance. If not, I can plan for better eating the next day.

If you were to make a pie chart on how you spend an average day, what (besides hours spent sleeping and working) would be the largest piece of your "pie"? Would the results be such as you'd be willing to add to a display in the church foyer? Probably, most of us would have to log in at least a few wasted hours over a week's time.

This week's theme, "Connected in Service", calls us to consider how well we are fulfilling God's call - and example - to serve others. In just scanning the focal verses, we may not see much that points toward servanthood, but it's there, waiting to be unearthed with a little spiritual digging. It will be helpful to read over the whole 5th chapter of Ephesians to get a better handle on the truths we should glean from today's lesson. We see such phrases as "Be imitators of God" and "live a life of

love" (vs. 1 NIV), "Live as children of light" (vs. 8) and "find out what pleases the Lord" (vs. 10). Serving others is one way to fulfil the requirements of these verses.

Because we "were once darkness" (vs. 8), but now abide in Christ's light, verse 15 tells us to pay attention to how we live. We're to put aside the former ways of ungodliness and seek wisdom to "make the most of every opportunity" (our pie chart, as it were). I have an elderly friend; she takes time to be

involved in volunteer activities in our community, and cherishes serving her church as well. As she wakens each

morning, she thanks the Lord for another day to serve Him, and asks Him to lead her and place her where she can bless others. As you can imagine, she is a delight to be around; she's a glowing witness for her Savior, and an example of selfless servanthood.

Exemplifying such a self-effacing

lifestyle is not natural. No, it's supernatural! Verse 18 explains how this is accomplished. Paul told his Ephesian brothers and sisters not to get drunk with wine, but to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Consider the comparison: when people are intoxicated, they lose control of their words and actions. They are acting out of character, compared to their sober selves. When a Christian yields his total self - physically, mentally and emotionally - to control by the indwelling Spirit of God, then a remarkable

change comes over him. The very nature of Christ pours from his life! And part of the result will

be a life of service. Early in His earthly ministry, the Lord Jesus modeled this relationship between the Spirit's power and the work of God in the world. As He entered the synagogue one Sabbath day, he took a scroll and read from Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,

because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18-19 (NRSV)). In this prophecy about Himself, we see Jesus - the epitome of Spirit-filled living - describing the blessed results such a life would have on a hurting world. Surrendering to the Holy Spirit causes songs of joy to well up in our hearts, resulting in our "always giving thanks to God the Father for everything..." (vs. 20 NIV). Submitting our wills to the Lord will enable us to defer to the needs of our fellow believers as well (see vs. 21). In a "me-first" society, the word "submission" rankles many, but it's a requirement for a close walk with Christ. When we struggle to put aside our own desires for the good of our church and its ministries, we'd do well to ponder Jesus' ultimate act of submission: "for the joy set before him, [he] endured the cross..." (Hebrews 12:2 NIV). Compared to this, our sacrifices are light indeed.

Maniscalco is a member of Lemoyne Boulevard Church in Biloxi.

Bible Studies for Life
with Ann Maniscalco



be a life of service.

Early in His earthly ministry, the Lord Jesus modeled this relationship between the Spirit's power and the work of God in the world. As He entered the synagogue one Sabbath day, he took a scroll and read from Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,

afresh from that point, never by simply going on."

Cribb is associate professor of Christian studies at Baptist-affiliated Anderson University in Anderson, S.C., and

chair of the Christian Studies Department. This column first appeared at the Anderson University faculty blog MinistryU.org, and appears here courtesy of Baptist Press. Edited for style.

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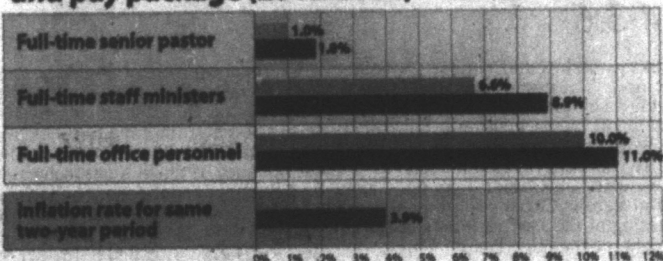
should pray that the light of the Gospel and of the Gospel-centered vision of marriage

might penetrate the cultural fog surrounding this issue.

Of course, no easy answers exist and we should be prepared to be maligned by many, even if we do attempt a more constructive approach.

If we are attempting to maintain an unhelpful strategy, maybe we need to look at changing. As C.S. Lewis wrote, "A sum can be put right: but only by going back till you find the error and working it

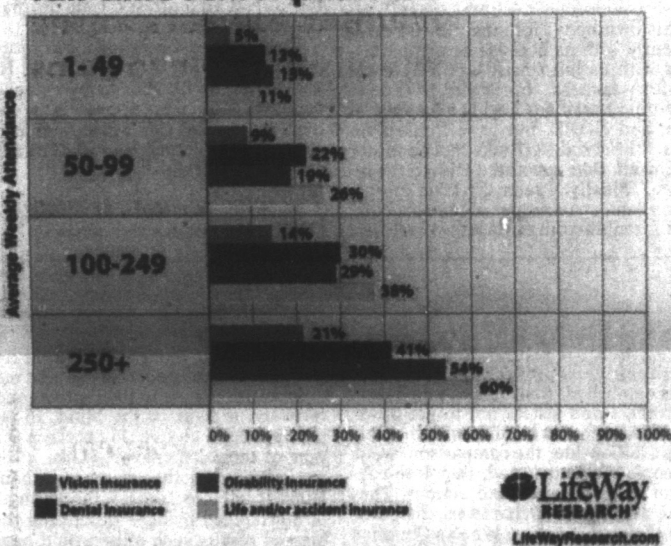
Changes to SBC church staff compensation and pay package (2012-2014)



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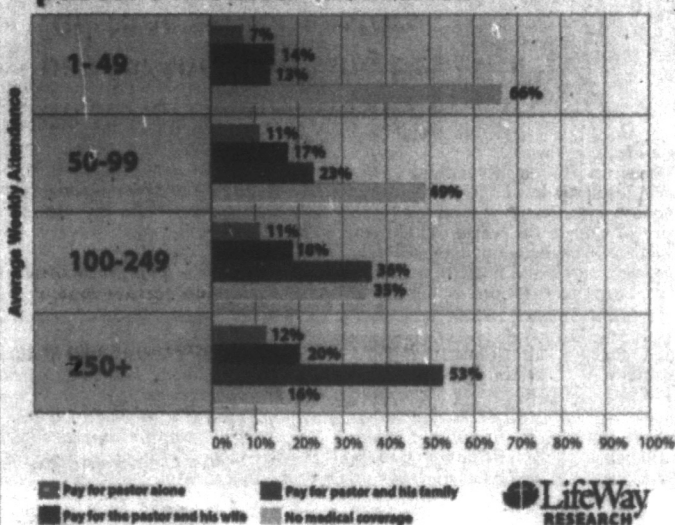
SBC churches who fully or partially pay for the following benefits for full-time senior pastors



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Percentages of SBC churches paying some or all of the full-time senior pastor's medical insurance



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Compensation study: some news good, some not so good

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Compensation for full-time Southern Baptist pastors has not kept pace with inflation over the past two years, while salaries for other full-time ministers and office staff increased at a rate higher than national inflation.

Those findings are part of the 2014 Southern Baptist Convention Compensation Study, an in-depth survey of 12,907 staff members in Southern Baptist churches. Baptist state conventions along with LifeWay Research and GuideStone Financial Resources conduct this survey every two years.

All the data acquired by the study has been compiled into an online tool at LifeWay.com/CompensationSurvey.

Adjusting for church size (see methodology below), the average full-time Southern Baptist senior pastor's compensation (salary and housing) rose one percent between 2012 and 2014. That rate of change was significantly lower than the 3.9% inflation rate for the same two-year period, according to figures supplied by the U.S. Department of Labor's Consumer Price Index.

Keeping pace?

According to Scott McConnell, director of LifeWay Research, "While inflation has remained moderate by historical standards, average salaries for full-time pastors have not kept pace. This is a reversal of the pattern of [Southern Baptist] churches through the recession and post-recession years."

Overall, the value of the entire pay package (salary, housing, and other benefits such as insurance) for the average full-time senior pastor rose by 1.8%.

For other full-time staff ministers, however, basic salary and housing compensation increased 6.6% between 2012 and 2014, while total pay package including compensation and benefits rose 8.9%. Salary compensation for full-time office personnel increased 10%, and their total pay package jumped 11%.

When it came to determining pastors' compensation rates, education level, tenure at their current church, and higher resident membership and weekly attendance resulted in more compensation. Each additional education degree of any kind adds to a pastor's compensation. Seminary graduates receive, on average, \$1,981 more in total compensation than non-seminary graduates and receive more vacation days.

"We have seen firsthand that many churches have yet to see their pre-recession giving levels return," said GuideStone President O.S. Hawkins. "Even so, it is imperative for churches to keep in mind the real financial needs of pastors and other staff members."

"No God-called pastor I know is looking to become wealthy off the ministry he has received from the Lord, but our churches should remember the Biblical admonition that 'those who preach the Gospel should live from the Gospel' (1 Cor. 9:14), and endeavor to ensure our pastors and their families are able to pay their expenses, have adequate insurance coverage, and are able to save for the future, including vocational retirement."

Med coverage lacking

The survey also revealed fewer full-time senior pastors receive medical insurance from their churches today than in 2012. Sixty percent of churches partially or fully pay medical insurance for their full-time senior pastors, compared to 64% in 2012.

Eleven percent of Southern Baptist churches provide at least partial medical insurance funding for the full-time pastor alone, while 17% fund coverage for the pastor and his wife, and 32% supply coverage for the pastor and his family — all slightly down from 2012.

For full-time senior pastors, churches fully or partially pay for the following benefits:

- Life and/or accident insurance — 34%
- Disability insurance — 28%
- Dental insurance — 27%
- Vision insurance — 12%

"Many Southern Baptist pastors are facing the new medical insurance mandate without their church's help," McConnell said. "These pastors have no choice over where this portion of their compensation goes and this leaves them with less to live on each month."

More than half of churches (53%) with weekly attendance above 250 people provide insurance for the pastor and his family. Nearly half (49%) of churches that average 50-99 people in weekly attendance do not provide any medical coverage.

"With the advent of health care reform legislation, it's a new world for many churches," Hawkins said. "GuideStone is privileged to come alongside tens of thousands of churches and serve as their trusted advocate, whether through the products we offer, or as a voice for our participants."

Bivo, part-time info

The survey also obtained compensation data for bivocational pastors and part-time custodial and office personnel. This data is standardized by the median number of hours worked to allow churches to more easily compare their part-time employees with these averages.

GuideStone makes available many resources for churches seeking to establish, restructure, or evaluate pay and benefit packages for their ministers and other staff. The free resources can be found at www.GuideStone.org/CompensationPlanning.

Methodology: Southern Baptist state conventions invited each church's staff to respond to the survey; 12,907 completed surveys were analyzed. For the purpose of this article, senior pastor responses were weighted to account for lower response rate among smaller churches and to match the distribution of the size of Southern Baptist churches.

When using the online tool, national totals may be somewhat higher than these weighted totals. Viewing the results by church size categories within the online tool minimizes this impact. When running customized reports online, error can be minimized by selecting criteria that allow for larger numbers of participants.